

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

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R 150106Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6163

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PDIP

SUBJECT: REACTION TO BICENTENNIAL

REFS: (A) STATE 169682; (B) MEXICO 8661

1. MEXICAN PRESIDENTIAL AND CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS JULY 4 NATURALLY OVERSHADOWED U.S. BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS. NEVERTHELESS, OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY'S NARROW POLITICAL ARENA, THERE HAS BEEN INTEREST IN EVENTS AND FESTIVITIES IN U.S. AMONG MEXICAN PUBLIC AND INORDINATE ATTENTION TO THESE EVENTS IN MEXICAN NEWS MEDIA. WITH ELECTION RESULTS HERE A FOREGONE CONCLUSION, LONG BEFORE POLLS OPENED, MAN IN THE STREET WAS OBVIOUSLY MUCH DISTRACTED BY SPECTACULAR EVENTS TAKING PLACE ACROSS BORDER.

2. GOM MADE NO EXTRA-SPECIAL NOTE OF THE OCCASION, ALTHOUGH FOREIGN SECRETARIAT TURNOUT (INCLUDING FOREIGN SECRETARY GARCIA ROBLES) AT OUR BICENTENNIAL RECEPTION WAS FAR GREATER THAN NORMAL. PROBABLY MOST NOTABLE OFFICIAL GOM STATEMENTS MARKING BICENTENNIAL WERE EXTEMPORANEOUS ONES OF ECHEVERRIA HIMSELF, REPORTED FULLY IN REFTEL B. UNFORTUNATELY, ON THAT OCCASION, PRESIDENT COULD NOT RESIST TEMPTATION TO PREACH AT US AND TO NOTE HOW FAR WE HAD "FALLEN" FROM THE PRINCIPLES LAID DOWN BY OUR FOREFATHERS. MANY MEXICANS
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HAVE COMMENTED PRIVATELY THAT THE PRESIDENT'S PREACHINGS

WERE INAPPROPRIATE TO SAY THE LEAST.

3. DURING WEEKS LEADING UP TO BICENTENNIAL, NEWSPAPERS WERE FULL OF OP-ED COLUMNS AND EDITORIALS KEYED TO BICENTENNIAL, A GREAT MANY OF THEM TAKING LINE SIMILAR TO PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA'S BUT A SUPRISING NUMBER ALSO GIVING CREDIT TO U.S. ACHIEVEMENTS AND FREE WORLD LEADERSHIP. ON THE WHOLE, EDITORIAL COMMENTS WERE NO MORE OR LESS THAN WHAT WE MIGHT HAVE PREDICTED, SELDOM VERY PROFOUND BUT IN GENERAL LESS CRITICAL THAN THEIR RUN-OF-THE-MILL STUFF. ON THE OTHER HAND, NON-POLITICAL HUMAN INTEREST COVERAGE OF BICENTENNIAL EVENTS HAS BEEN ENORMOUS, WITH VIRTUALLY EVERY NEWSPAPER OF WHATEVER COLORATION RUNNING SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTS AND EXTENSIVE FEATURES.

4. WITH A FEW EXCEPTIONS, CULTURAL EVENTS KEYED TO BICENTENNIAL HAVE BEEN AMERICAN-SPONSORED. NOTABLE EXCEPTIONS WERE (A) LECTURES ON U.S. REVOLUTION SPONSORED BY FRENCH EMBASSY, (B) LECTURES ON REVOLUTIONARY PERSONALITIES, SPONSORED BY MEXICAN ACADEMY OF GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY, WHERE AMBASSADOR AND FONSEC WERE BILLED AS GUESTS OF HONOR; AND (C) ISSUANCE BICENTENNIAL COMMEMORATIVE POSTAGE STAMP BY GOM.

5. IN SUM, BICENTENNIAL PASSED HERE WITH MUCH SPECIAL INTEREST BUT WITH NO SPECTACULAR REACTION.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, NEWS MEDIA COMMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MEXICO09043
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760272-0447
From: MEXICO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760756/aaaabwqu.tel
Line Count: 88
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 169682, 76 MEXICO 8661
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22 JUL 2004 by ellisoob>; APPROVED <29 OCT 2004 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: REACTION TO BICENTENNIAL
TAGS: PDIP, PFOR, SCUL, PDEV, MX, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006